

RTÉ statement on BAI report

RTÉ accepts BAI findings

DG and Chairman reiterate deep regret for errors

All BAI investigator's recommendations responded to by RTÉ

Ten specific reforms and implementations itemised

Report of Prof Horgan also implemented and now published

RTÉ will embed new structures and standards

500 staff already trained in new journalism Guidelines

The Board of RTÉ and its Director General have today formally accepted the findings of the BAI Inquiry into the Prime Time Investigates programme *A Mission to Prey*.

They have reiterated their determination to ensure that the key actions and changes which have been introduced at RTÉ will mean that serious editorial errors, which in this case resulted in the grievous defamation of the innocent Fr Kevin Reynolds, will not be repeated.

RTÉ has responded to the published Recommendations contained within the BAI Report, showing how each of 10 separate, formal Recommendations by the BAI's Investigating Officer has been met with specific actions designed to redress the particular errors and potential ongoing risks identified by the BAI. The key issues addressed include:

Guidelines specific to investigative journalism; 'Doorstepping' and surreptitious recording; Programme documentation; Handling and evaluation of sources; Culture of review and challenge; High risk programmes; Liaising with Legal Affairs
Annual review of programme-making guidelines; RTÉ staff training.

In addition RTÉ today publishes the independent report commissioned from Professor John Horgan into the safety of editorial processes, and confirms it has adopted through Prof Horgan's recommendations a number of measures additional to those specified in the BAI Report.

"The findings announced by the BAI today, together with the report prepared for the Inquiry by Ms Anna Carragher, do not make easy reading for RTÉ. We are not proud of the picture presented in the findings," said Noel Curran, Director General. "However, we have learned from and we will continue to learn from these grave errors."

"A great deal has changed in recent months at RTÉ and more will change as we embed the new structures which have been introduced through our work to overcome this regrettable period in RTÉ's history. We know we have fine people with

great skills and that the way this programme was presented to our viewers was not representative of the excellence for which our journalists, producers and editors have been rightly praised.

“With that knowledge, and with the commitment that I have seen in recent months within the organisation to work hard to regain the public trust that was lost as a result of this programme, I am confident that we can get past this difficult time,” the Director General said.

The Director General commented on the embedding of the new standards, guidelines and structures which were announced in early April. “Already, over 500 RTÉ staff have undergone a training programme on the new Journalism Guidelines, and 600 in all will have completed this by mid-May. The Editorial Standards Board also has begun its work. We have advertised to fill vacancies in key senior editorial positions and a new current affairs structure is in place.

“Also, the work of Dr Maurice Hayes and his expert colleagues, relating to the investigation of personnel matters arising from The Mission to Prey programme, is continuing under the auspices of RTÉ’s HR procedures and will conclude shortly,” said Mr Curran. “And importantly, our team in current affairs will continue to develop investigative programming and we will announce the format for this programming in the Autumn” he said.

The Chairman of RTÉ Tom Savage commented on behalf of the RTÉ Board: “Since last autumn, RTÉ has been dealing with the unprecedented results of grave editorial failures. And the consequences have been serious in the extreme. A High Court action was followed by a statutory investigation and we were obliged to make no comment until that investigation was over.”

“I hope it’s now clear that we have been doing a very great deal in recent months to restore faith in our journalism. The best external, independent advice has shaped our response. The Director General, with the support of the Board of RTÉ, has introduced comprehensive reforms in editorial structures, in management, and in operations. Journalists, editors, and programme makers are being trained in new editorial guidelines.”

Mr Savage said that a board committee will shortly open discussions within the organisation on constructive ways of supporting best journalistic practice, including undertaking a consultation to assess the cultural and working environment in which editorial and creative decision-making takes place. He said: “The Board will continue to work with the Director General to ensure that RTÉ’s journalism meets the most demanding tests of fairness, impartiality, and accountability.

“As Chairperson, I know that this is what the public expects. The Board, for its part, s determined to meet that expectation.”